Collaborative Ethnographic Mentoring of EFL Teachers in Central Mexico

M. Martha Lengeling, Troy Crawford & Irasema Mora-Pablo

Universidad of Guanajuato, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, MEXICO

Abstract

This qualitative research project reports the process and experiences of two English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers who were mentored and trained to become future teacher trainers or teachers-in-training. They participated in a 120-hour teacher-training course given to other EFL teachers at a technical university of central Mexico. In this course the two teachers-in-training shadowed two experienced teacher trainers who engaged in a collaborative ethnographic dialogue and were given several negotiated scaffolding tasks to carry out during the course. Data was collected from a series of shared journals and a focus group of the participants to understand the process and their experiences. The results explore their challenges and the benefits they encountered during the training course, as well as their projection to the future as professionals. This is of interest for those who train teachers and those who would like to become teacher trainers in the future.

Keywords: collaborative ethnography, EFL teachers, mentoring, scaffolding, shadowing.

1. Introduction

When becoming a teacher, we often have someone we look up to and someone that we can ask for advice. This person is often thought of and named as a mentor. Malderez (2001: 57) defines mentoring "to describe the support given by one (usually more experienced) person for the growth and learning of another, and for their integration into and acceptance by a specific community". Richards and Farrell (2005: 151-152) describe mentoring as "a process whereby an experienced teacher works with a novice teacher, giving guidance and feedback". Fletcher (2000) mentions that mentoring "reflects the potential of one-to-one professional relationship that can simultaneously empower and enhance practice" (cited in Diaz-Maggiloi, 2004: 48). In short, mentoring provides support to someone who needs it for professional growth. Yet at the same time, the mentoring process often incorporates the possibility of a dialogue between mentee and mentor. This process of a dialogue can become a territory for permanent negotiation of meaning (Hall, Hellermann & Doehler, 2011).

In this research we examined how mentoring was carried out with two Master's in Applied Linguistics of English Language Teaching (ELT) students who were also practicing EFL teachers. They were in the process of becoming future teacher trainers or teacher educators. These two participants will be referred to as teachers-in-training and their task was to shadow their two professors from the Master's program who were in charge of designing and giving a semester long professional development course to a group of 20 EFL teachers at a local technical university. The

Correspondence: M. Martha Lengeling, University of Guanajuato, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Guanajuato, MEXICO. E-mail: lengelin@ugto.mx.

two professors were the mentors to the two Master's students and teacher trainers to the 20 EFL teachers. It should be mentioned that these two Master's students had also been our students in the BA in English Language Teaching. Another person was the Master's Coordinator. In essence, the more expert teacher trainers were training both the graduate students and the course participants/EFL teachers. Randall (2001: 13) describes two types of roles that a mentor may take on: (1) "technical/assessment" roles, and (2) "personal development" roles. The first set of roles is concerned with helping the mentee understand how to put to use skills in the classroom, broader aspects of the curriculum, how to structure objectives, and how to assess actions within the classroom. The second set of roles deals with the affective domain such as resolving issues, attentive listening, and giving advice.

The training course followed what we could call standard norms for Mexico. The Department Head introduced everyone and outlined the general purpose of the course. Then he explained how it would fit in with the local institution's permanent training program. Once the actual teaching of the course began, there was a critical incident that is at the core of the reason for this article on the first day. As the professors and teachers-in-training were presented simultaneous to the training group, the teachers-in-training were given the same status as their professors. This status quickly disappeared in the first session. However, it produced a continuous conversation that we had with them during and after the course (see "side play dialogue", Kamberelis, 2001). Our two teachers-in-training began an on-going conversation with us on how they felt their loss of status at the beginning of the course and were concerned about how to recover it. This in turn produced what seems to be a type of duoethnographic or collaborative dialogue (Rhinehart & Earl, 2016) that emerged outside, yet inside the training course. In the next section, background information will be provided concerning the context of the use of mentorship within the teacher-training course.

The two experienced teacher trainers were asked to give a 120-hour training course to twenty practicing EFL teachers in a large technical university in central Mexico. The purpose was for their continuing educational development as a requirement for their university. The two teachers-in-training were not part of the technical university but were invited to be trained as future teacher trainers. They were in their mid-twenties in their second year of a Master's in Applied Linguistics in English Language Teaching. They had experience as EFL teachers and are non-native speakers. It should be mentioned that the two university professors had more than 30 years in teacher training and doctoral degrees, as well as being native speakers of English. From the beginning of the course, the teachers-in-training shadowed the two experienced teacher trainers to gain insight as to what the process of teacher training entailed. They were instructed to help the experienced teacher trainers with a variety of tasks, such as reading and providing feedback to the assigned journal entries, taking a leadership role in small groups, collecting homework, handing out documents, and answering doubts from the practicing teachers. The more complex tasks included leading discussion groups, eliciting information from the 20 EFL teachers, and providing feedback on their work and resolving doubts. These tasks were scaffolded in complexity and given a few at a time. The tasks were increased once the two teachers-in-training felt more comfortable. In essence, the tasks were graded, from the beginning with first shadowing of the two teacher trainers and progressing towards more complex tasks. This was carried out in order to provide the building of confidence and understanding the complexities of teacher education. The result was the slow development of a permanent collaborative conversation of training that started in the car driving back to our own institution and continued inside and outside the classroom in the MA courses of the teachers-in-training.

2. Methodology from a Non-traditional Position in EFL Teacher Training

As previously mentioned from the onset of the course we were confronted with this critical incident which promoted a type of collaborative conversation. This dialogue seemed to emerge from a position of a loss of face by the graduate student participants. They were in their final year of study and all had more educational preparation, and experience than the group of 20 teachers at the technological university. Rather than try to suppress this unexpected turn or 'critical incident', we assumed the position of (Barrett & Brown, 2014):

> In the absence of a more formal mentorship arrangement, we thus turned to more egalitarian examples of faculty mentorship, namely, informal arrangements. Informal mentoring partnerships develop on the basis of perceived competence and interpersonal comfort (Allen, Poteet & Burroughs, 1997). Members select partners whose beliefs and values are in alignment, which in turn may serve to underpin an enjoyable working relationship. Our partnership followed this pattern. In addition, our form of dialogue and collaboration were comfortably borne out of professional interplay that at times closely resembled reciprocal mentoring (Henry, Stockdale, Hall, & Deniston, 1994). Thus, our partnership evolved organically out of our mutual pursuit of the skills we needed to successfully navigate our resocialization as second-career academics within education. (p. 3)

This is an interesting methodological paradigm shift, in the sense that we initially did not intend to do it. As this conversation emerged with intensity. The two participants were quite concerned and felt as if they were not being taken fully into account. On the outset we had conversations in the 40-minute car ride back to the university; however, as it continued and began to affect decisions in the course execution, we realized that this discussion of professional status had a deep importance for the graduate student participants. At the same time, we had to consider the administrative aspects of course because we did not only train our MA students, but we worked under the frame of an institutional agreement. As a result, we decided to include the Master's program coordinator in the discussion. This created an additional dialogue of the process. After each session, we had short debriefing sessions of an informal nature with our program supervisor.

In the course of developing our mentoring partnership with our students, and as part of our preparation for our informal meetings, we modified the course process based on our own practices and early experiences in the EFL profession. Specifically, we examined (a) collaborative ethnography through our conversations to examine our co-constructed experiences in the second language teaching, (b) mentoring with our graduate students, and (c) the re-socialization of academics. In doing so, we tried to provide a contextual understanding of how we, were able to aid our graduate students make the transition to teacher trainers. Finally, during the course we have constructed an overriding multi-voice narrative that was founded in the concept of collaboration both in and outside the formal research boundaries. Collaborative regarding this idea of Rinehart and Earl (2016):

> In some senses, all ethnographies are collaborative. From anthropological studies "in the golden age" of ethnography, we know that the participants and/or subjects of study are necessary to the ethnographic project – often not receiving the acknowledgment of their co-participation, their co-production of the disseminated work. What we mean by the term "collaborative ethnography" can refer to a version of "classical" or "traditional" ethnography, which has itself become increasingly collaborative or group oriented; or it can refer to collaborative ethnographies that draw from the insights and impulses of both auto- and duoethnography. (p. 216)

These authors also point out that: "many collaborative ethnographies have shifted from studying to studying with and researching self and others in a group. As well, collaborative ethnographies have been "operationally defined quite differently in the academic literature" (Rinehart & Earl, 2016: 217). In EFL there is a tendency towards autoethnographic, or self-study,

hiding under the guise of narrative research (e.g., Barkhuizen, 2011). At the same there is research on the presence of the researcher, which implies that there is possibly a body of EFL research that is co-produced with the research participants. We decided given to what occurred naturally in the research process to simply move forward away from our 'traditional' EFL professional research zone of mentoring and embrace the idea of collaborative ethnography to provide opportunities for greater engagement with both text, project, and the clearly defined three groups that were participating in the project (Lassiter, 2005).

Here, 'collaborative' implies reciprocal trust and respect for different opinions and views on learning, but also taking into account different levels of status within three clearly defined groups. This type of definition of collaborative seems to offer a sharper image of what occurred during the project, versus a duoethnography which would have led us back as researchers to a more 'traditional' stance in the EFL field (cf. Denzin, 2014).

In order to achieve this collaboration and to explore the participants' views and learning experiences, we used two formal techniques to gather data. As part of their training course tasks, participants were asked to keep a journal during the course and at the end a focus group was conducted. They were advised to write about any thoughts or ideas they would have as part of being part of this training course, their role as co-trainers and the interaction with the trainers. In research, "journal writing can help language teachers (both beginning and experienced) think about their work" (Farrell, 2007: 108). In the case of these two teachers-in-training, they were being mentored by two experienced trainers. Brock, Yu and Wong (1992) suggest that journal writers can benefit more from having others read their journals, so they can get another's perspective and insight that may be difficult to achieve when reflecting alone. This could be considered a sounding board of ideas and feelings.

Moreover, in order to obtain rich and in-depth information, the MA coordinator carried out a focus group discussion with the two teachers-in-training after the training course was finished. The term focus group can be considered confusing, as there are many different names that have been used to define this technique in qualitative research (Ruyter, 1996). However, for the purposes of this research, we use the term focus group discussion which "is defined as a group of people brought together to participate in the discussion of an area of interest. The focus group discussion aims to provide an environment in which all members of the group can discuss the area of investigation with each other" (Boddy, 2005: 251). The role of the moderator in this type of discussion was to keep the topic of discussion on the area of interest. For this reason, a set of questions were designed before the focus group discussion in order to serve as a guide. Participants were given a letter of informed consent to grant permission of the data collected and protect their identity. This is basically a valid point as the participants evolved into co-authors through the course of the research process.

Even though there was this level of formality and care in the data collection, it cannot be lost that the catalyst of the data generation was the car ride home discussions. This type of informal professional talk could be seen as "side-play" in relation to the formalities of research, yet here, this side-play was central to creating this text. Here, we try to emphasize the "co-production" of the research. Linked to this 'co-production we have need to bring in the MA program coordinator. The car conversations spilled over into the workplace and we extended in brief conversation with our supervisor, who was responsible for the agreement that created the training course we were using to train our MA students. Rather than suppress these situations we decide to exploit them to their full potential with the idea our enriching our data analysis.

3. Analysis of data

We center on the experiences of two MA students with EFL practicing teachers who were taking a training course given by two experienced teacher trainers (mentors). We worked with the EFL teachers, but at the same time guided our MA students in order to train them to become future teacher trainers. From the data collected in the journals and the focus group with the participants, several issues arose regarding challenging experiences they encountered, as well as situations that resulted in growth and benefit for their own professional development. The position of the participants within the teacher training course was multi-faceted, since they developed several tasks and roles. Their roles within the training course included being a tutor to other English teachers, learning to become a teacher trainer, with the support and guidance of their mentors, while at the same time being English teachers and MA students. In this regard, it seems natural that these future teacher trainers would encounter themselves facing demanding situations involving their mentors, tutees and themselves as tutors and teacher trainers-in-training. However, they took advantage of challenging situations throughout the course which allowed them to become more aware of their own professional growth. As a result of the data analysis, the emergence of main aspects related to their teacher training course illustrate how such experiences resulted in a positive impact for their professional development. The data analysis was carried out by the authors and the two teachers-in-training.

4. Feeling insecure and lacking confidence

One major outcome from the data is the presence of insecurity and lack of confidence in the two participants, in the initial stages of the course. The reflective journals show that participants began their participation in the training course with these feelings. The participants reported that they experienced such feelings for several reasons. The perceived expectations held by the EFL teachers were a major determiner to their lack of confidence. The two teachers-in-training noticed particular behaviors and attitudes from the EFL teachers that might have impacted their self-confidence. One participant expressed his concern about these expectations: "I was feeling nervous because one somehow perceives certain expectations that teachers may have" (PP2).

The previous extract illustrates how he felt insecure due to the expectations the EFL teachers had towards them, or his perceptions. The data also suggests that participant gave importance to the image he projected to the EFL teachers in the course. Often the participants would voice their opinions that that the EFL teachers held prejudices regarding their level of preparation. The same participant shared the following thought during the focus group: "When they saw that we were going to be their tutors, I felt like they expected something like a native speaker, a doctor or something like that" (PP2). These are perceived ideas of both. It should be mentioned that the two were non-native speakers, just as the EFL teachers, but the participants had a higher level of education in ELT.

From this idea the two participants were overly alert regarding the EFL teachers' attitudes, expectations and behaviors. Their idealizations of what a good teacher trainer entails affected the way the participants felt concerning their own role and professional performance as future teacher trainers. The participants were affected by the opposing image they projected regarding their mentors, who were the main figures in the training course. Having this separation, the position that the two experienced teachers held as doctors and native speakers and the position of participants as young MA students, may have influenced their self-perception and image in the training course. The following extract shows how the participants were aware of this division, and how the EFL teachers were also able to notice it:

They [EFL teachers] did make the division. Here we have the professors who have many years of experience and they know what they are doing. They have all these publications, al1 of these things they've done, and we are the MA students. (PPJ)

The two began the course being aware of this separation, which may have resulted in a preconception of the course dynamic. The role of the experienced teacher trainers in the course was made clear from the beginning, and the importance of their participation was clarified. They wanted to provide a learning experiences of becoming a teacher trainer for the two participants. The reason for the two participants having insecurity is perhaps a result of their own perception of a non-equal status with the two experienced teacher trainers. This situation of the two participants and the EFL teachers trying to achieve a collaborative relationship among each other turned out to be something that had to be worked on and eventually beneficial in the final stages of the training course.

The participants reported feelings of being underestimated and judged by EFL teachers, especially through their non-verbal messages. This situation was present during the beginning of the course; however, they reported a decrease in such issues, although not a complete decrease of it. As they became more familiarized with the teacher-training course and the tasks they oversaw, they became less insecure, gained confidence and showed a better command of the interactions in their groups of tutees. An important factor that contributed to the acquisition of confidence and command in the training course was the role of the experienced teacher trainers. One of the participants expressed how the two experienced teacher trainers were central elements in their development of confidence and overall professional growth:

I progressed in acquiring more confidence and learning what Troy and Martha told us... they helped us to notice all of these expectations, all of what they communicated without speaking, we used all of that to grow from it. (PPJ)

The role of experienced teacher trainers was a major influence in the two participants' process of becoming trainers and their professional development. Having more experienced and skillful role models represented an opportunity for the participants to have more quality learning moments to take advantage from. They found support and encouragement from the examples of the experienced teacher trainers, which they highlighted throughout the data. Given the fact that they were also their MA teachers, the participants were able to overcome their insecurities by building a closer relationship of professionalism and respect.

Since the two participants were insecure at the beginning stages, they highlighted the importance of finding support in the two teacher trainers. The fact that both groups were working together during the training course made it less difficult to handle their tasks on their own. The two had to engage in a variety of tasks, such as handling group activities with the practicing teachers, answering questions, clarifying doubts and providing feedback. They valued the two experienced teachers being there to support them and openly acknowledged that they helped them in particular situations when they felt tasks got complicated. At the same time, the participants held an image of themselves as the MA students, which may have also influenced the way they perceived their own roles and their own significance in the training course. One of the participant's comments on this situation by asserting that they knew their place in the course and that the two experienced trainers certainly helped them learn and handle particular situations. The following extract highlights this point:

Thank God we have our teachers [mentors] because they know how to cope with some attitudes from the teachers and they know how to give them an answer that satisfies them ... maybe we could do it as well but not in the same way so maybe it wouldn't be so satisfying for them, because we're students, MA students but, we at least have background knowledge and experience. (PP1)

From the data the two perceived their two experienced teacher trainers as their mentors. The participants stated that they were aware of the perceptions that the EFL teachers had towards the two experienced teacher trainers and themselves. The EFL teachers could separate the roles of each, and therefore, they showed different attitudes towards the MA students and the experienced teacher trainers.

> *Another thing that I learn from the teacher was her ability to find a solution to a situation. It's like she smoothed it out ...so I liked that strategy because she said: "Before you criticize or judge a teacher you have to listen to their justification, because it is very important to understand their reasons." (PP2)*

Observation plays an important part in the training process. From this experience the participants mentioned they had acquired several training skills by observing how things were done in the course, such as practical techniques of how to handle situations. These learned lessons gave the participants confidence and the know-how as to how to handle different teaching scenarios.

5. Role achievement

This section presents a narration that describes chronologically the different episodes lived throughout the course. We approach such events from two different perspectives: the experienced teachers and the teachers-in-training' roles. The teachers-in-training had the position of a *tutor* which meant that this person had to assist the two professors in the MA, who were the *mentors*. During this course, the mentors prepared the two teachers-in-training to become future teacher trainers. Throughout the sessions several experiences, tasks and emotional episodes took place. This description comes from the reflective journals that the two teachers-in-training wrote and the focus group interview that was carried out by the MA coordinator.

The course offered to English teachers encompassed two themes: professional development and material design. Their function within this course was to assist and support any necessity that the EFL teachers and the course in general may require. The role we performed was that of a teacher-in-training. As teachers-in-training, they saw the professional work that was part of this course. This space represented an opportunity for them to put into practice what they had learned throughout their training. When the course began, they had their own perceptions and expectations towards the EFL teachers. The following data extract from one of the participants exemplifies this point:

> *My first impression was the way in which EFL teachers from the school reacted when they saw that we would be their tutors. I perceived that it was an uncomfortable situation for the teachers as well as for us. I perceived that they probably thought how was it possible that these young teachers would teach experienced teachers...On the other hand, as a novice teacher, I could not believe that I would help these teachers with their learning. I did not feel confident when working with them. But then I remembered what a coordinator from the English program at the Language Department) who told me one day in my classroom observations: "Don't doubt about what you know!" Then, I decided to get rid of these negative emotions at that moment. For example, that uncomfortable situation increased a little bit more because one of the EFL teachers was my coordinator at UTL. So he could surely have expectations about me as the tutor. This made me understand why some teachers found it difficult to be guided by too young tutors. (J1-C).*

The noticed perceptions from the EFL teachers were felt by both participants. In the following extract the other participant supports the previous idea about how they were seen:

Before actually participating in this course, I had some expectations and presumptions about how the course in general was going to work out. First, I believed that our role as tutors and trainers in this course was going to be difficult. At this point of the course I still consider that this experience has been challenging. It is very different to execute the role of a tutor for teachers-in-training, because all of them have their own ideas, beliefs and attitudes towards teaching, learning and development. When working with the teachers, I perceive that some of them feel dubious about my capacities as a teacher. (J1-A)

As observed in the previous extract, the participants also held their own expectations about the course, and they felt nervous before even getting to know the EFL teachers. Their introduction to the overall course was a key aspect that might have marked the ongoing course dynamic. They went through several critical situations and incidents that were not completely severe, but that began to determine the general atmosphere in the course.

One of the critical situations they faced was the introduction to the EFL teachers. The doctors, who were the mentors and trainers, explained their professional education, the research field they were studying and the role they would play in the course. It was an uncomfortable situation because from the beginning the participants felt the EFL teachers held certain opinions about them. Such perceived opinions made the participants position themselves in an inferior position in comparison to the EFL teachers. They perceived the following because of teachers' behavior:

When the teachers saw that we were going to be the tutors, I felt that they expected something like a native speaker, or a doctor or something like that because of the way they looked at us. So, they were looking at us, they looked at our physical appearance and we looked younger. Then it was like: How are we going to take advice from you? So, at the beginning there was a certain social distance so to speak. I really felt that when they were saying something, their voice and their look was towards someone else and not me, but instead it was between themselves. This kind of situation made me very nervous and I thought to myself "I know this" because I already have a done a BA and now, we are in a MA. Despite of all this, I felt that their expectations were very high. Although they never mentioned anything, I could tell because somehow, I felt excluded. (INT-C)

It is really interesting to listen to what they have to say, either positive or not really that positive. I have learned that teachers may hold impressions of me as a trainer, which may be negative, such as believing I am unskilled, unexperienced or not capable. I have learned that this is an important opportunity to demonstrate that the hard work I have been doing since the BA and now in the MA has been valuable and worth it. (A1-J)

Through these extracts the participants reflected upon the ways in which they felt the teachers perceived them and in turn, those attitudes and behaviors influenced their performance. At the beginning the two expressed their thoughts with the mentors, telling them that they felt nervous and that they perceived certain resistance and disregard from the EFL teachers. However, throughout the course they developed several mechanisms as trainees in order to handle the situation in the best way possible.

They were assigned different teachers to tutor. They were also involved in every task with groups to guide them in order to achieve the learning objectives of that session. However, they were assistants of the doctors/mentors and for the sessions. In other words, they were ignored, or they were, most of time, the immediate resource of help. The EFL teachers perhaps thought that they were there to help to solve their own doubts and difficulties. Therefore, at that moment, the two were considered by the EFL teachers:

They were expecting us to solve everything for them. Then they began to take things very seriously. They sent me emails and wanted appointments. And I said, are we

forced to do that? They told me: "We're going to see each other on a Friday and you have to go so you can tell us. That tells me that they wanted me to give them the answer, explain everything to them, and so they could say: "Oh yeah you helped us because you are the tutor." (INT-C)

Some of them were questioning exactly everything I told them, since they wanted me to tell them what to do, or the "answer" so that they could move on. My intention was to guide them, but instead, they thought I was incapable of directing the whole activity. (A1-C)

In both extracts we show that the EFL teachers quickly built an image of their roles, which could change depending on the needs in the course. For instance, the second extract shows how the teachers expected the participants to have all the answers. This situation caused some complications since the teachers might have believed that the two did not possess the required qualifications in order to play such a role in the course. They experienced different situations during the sessions that made them reflect and even lead them to perceive the EFL teachers' resistance. There were three sessions that caught their attention when the EFL teachers disagreed with the content and the objectives of the lessons. One lesson was about textbook analysis, the other one was about the audio-recording of task instructions in the classroom and the last one was about classroom observation. Throughout these tasks the two teachers-in-training expressed their thoughts and arguments to defend their viewpoints or to question the reason to do these activities as part of the course.

We have never taken it as something personal, rather as knowing how to be professional. I think that is very good and regarding the way in which criticism is addressed, there was a lot of resistance. I remember that on one occasion, Troy was with a teacher discussing something... and the other teacher did not give in... no, no, not so much give in but to change, right? That she could see from another perspective what was happening in his class about what was it? "Advertisements," it was something like that and Troy (he said), No, look it's just that it happens because of that... what you are doing is you're only projecting your philosophy ... your ideology and she said no, and everyone said they are doing it, and that is the profession of many years right? Then, there where you see the learning happen, that you are already used to that type of situation; it's like on whole other level. (INT-C)

From this extract we can observe how the two participants noticed that in most cases the EFL teachers did not want to receive any type of feedback that could appear harsh or attacking their personal beliefs, since they took the comments as personal criticism rather than an opportunity to challenge themselves, in their opinion.

The following extract shows another episode in which they perceived the EFL teachers' resistance to complete certain tasks:

When Troy asked for the instructions to be audio recorded, at least in my group it was total nervousness. They asked how, and this and that: "How are we going to record ourselves?" And I said "yes" ...but it caused them a lot of work. I still remember that Troy had asked them a session later and they had not done it and Troy gave them another week but in reality, it was not really what Troy expected. I mean it was that they were to audio-record the instructions... (INT-C)

In this data we can see that their perception as teachers-in-training was that the EFL teachers were not accustomed to share their teaching with other coworkers and teachers. The participants detected the teachers' struggle to carry out such activities that perhaps they may see themselves to be exposed. The previous shows us that these teachers may not have not cultivated the habit of sharing and analyzing their work with other teachers.

And I remember that Martha also asked for a video recording and they did not do it (A1-INT). They never did it. They said: "How do we do it? … There was evidence of the resistance they had… But I was like… why that resistance? They had very strong beliefs, and I mentioned that to them… (INT-C)

We can see that there is a noticed position from the EFL teachers, in which they showed resistance to complete certain tasks, and to acknowledge and review other ideas, opinions and even teaching practices. In other words, they did not accept the comments easily that they were receiving from the participants, and in occasions even from the professors. The following extract from the interview supports this thought:

Something that I noticed was that the teachers usually showed a lot of resistance, especially against criticism. We were very used to saying that if we say something in class, and we are criticized, we should not take it personally. In fact, we even appreciated it. So, what I noticed is that, I do not know, if they take it personally or if they do not want to see themselves as exposed or… but you give them a comment: "Well this is not like this because here are the reasons, and this is what I believe, and even saying it through my perspective, they answer defensively and they do not even say thank you. (A1-INT)

In this extract we can notice two aspects. The first one is the picture that the two teachers-in-training began to build about the EFL teachers: their resistance and skeptical behavior caused them to build their own perceptions. The second aspect is the influence that their previous studies had in relation to the way EFL teachers handled constructive criticism. Their own previous experiences as BA and MA students shaped their overall view regarding the way they handled criticism, commentaries and suggestions from the mentors. The perceived resistance caused them to become slightly attentive when the two professors gave them opinions, because another factor was their age and teaching experience. The EFL teachers seemed to perceive them as younger teachers who lacked experience, therefore their resistance might have been caused by those ideas. In certain occasions, the EFL teachers even tried to evade some tasks that required them to expose their teaching in front of the group. This resistance showed us that the teachers were perhaps not accustomed to display their work, and therefore they preferred to avoid showing their teaching. This represents negotiation of power structures.

In the last week-sessions, we had a lesson about classroom observation which consisted of video-recordings of teachers' classes to watch them and provide feedback. The EFL teachers seemed to want to criticize the teacher's performance in the videos. However, one of the mentors clarified and established the purpose of the observation and more importantly, how to observe professionally and objectively.

Martha told them: "Think about yourselves." I think that she made things easier when she said "yourselves" especially at the time to work. So, I liked the strategy because even the videos were fine…because Martha showed us some videos of our class observations and we already knew (laughter)… it seemed that everybody was ready for the criticism…but with the questions it did not seem so. What I liked about the strategy was what she said: "Before you criticize or judge the teacher's work, you must listen to his/her justification, because it is very important to know the reasons why. (INT-C)

Even though the situations they faced with the EFL teachers, the two participants had an important factor of the mentor supervision which helped them for their learning as trainees for teachers training. The two mentors instructed them for every single task; however, they exposed the two to certain situations that they had to solve based on their own professional education, the mentor's instruction, suggestions and feedback and their own critical reflection.

Besides, they (the mentors) were, as you said evaluating us, and yes, we could feel the pressure. I think it was more like something we knew, we knew that they were

> *observing us and that we were going to get feedback, but not in a negative way. By this I mean that we were not doing it just because of the pressure of not getting scolded. Instead I would think: "OK, I'm glad to have these two people who are obviously important people!" I also think that it was a great opportunity to let them see how I could solve things, how I deal with a specific situation, how I present or how I talked. They said, "Ok you are going to be in charge of this aspect in your group" and I liked that. I liked that in some way we received feedback and it was obviously very valuable; communication between us was great because they are our same teachers from here. Now, we feel more confident to let our doubts out. (INT-G)*

> *Rather the new thing was, at least for me, the way in which she (Martha) trained the teachers because it is not that she came to impose. So, I liked it. It was something that I acquired from her, maybe we were already exposed to her, but to be on the other side, you can observe how they speak, how they approach things. Because they have to survive criticism, sometimes even destructive. But rather this was like enriching ...the tone of voice, the words they used, even body language and all those factors...stronger, more direct. What made me nervous was that he (Troy), as he monitored, walked between the chairs, and that made me nervous, because I knew he was listening. He did tell us in a certain way in what aspects we had to be more careful... I feel that in one way or another we were taking on the role well. It was not so strong. For example, Troy did demand a lot regarding the way we dressed. (INT-C)*

Based on the participants' experiences, and mentors' instruction and supervision, the two participants learned different aspects that contributed unconsciously to their professional development. When the session ended, they talked to their mentors about the experience of that day. The mentors acted as a sounding board. They asked the participants how the participants felt, what they did, how they solved problems, and what their opinion was about the session itself. As a result, every time they had a session with the teachers, they improved certain aspects, such as what to wear, how to talk and work with the EFL teachers, how to present a theme, and how to make suggestions, among other aspects.

> *As the sessions went by, I felt more confident and learned from what Troy and Martha would tell us. They would have expectations and we learned to grow from those expectations. I feel that that I considered the attitudes, sometimes negative, from certain EFL teachers, so that they would see that I would work on certain aspects. Obviously, there were some limitations. I was not going to do everything they were expecting. I feel that they expected me to be there more, and to participate more in their groups and ask more questions. I believe that that helped ease the tension that there was in the group. (INT-G)*

During the course the two teachers-in-training noticed the resistance and even incredulity of the teachers from the beginning. At the moment of the interview and through the writing of the journals, they had the opportunity to reflect and analyze the overall process of training. The previous extract shows that the participant was conscious about certain aspects of the relationship among the EFL teachers and herself. However, through deeper reflection she was able to realize that she should work on some aspects in order to improve those small limitations. The following extract shows a reflection on the same line:

> *Regarding professional development, it helped us polish the way we present ourselves as teachers. It is different being in front of a group of students and being in front of a group of English teachers. There was tension and it was difficult to switch roles at first. I feel that I learned how to present myself in front of them and to show them that I had something to offer. Many times, they viewed us as Martha's and Troy's helpers, and I think that we achieved that they viewed us as having something of value to offer as well. (INT-G)*

This extract demonstrates that there was a process of growth and development in the two teachers-in-training regarding various aspects. The most significant one is the acquisition of more confidence as they present themselves to the group of teachers. The course was an opportunity to put themselves in a rather new environment that was proven to help them grow as professionals, as trainees and as teachers in general.

The next extract weighs in the same topic of professional development:

In my case, there were many things regarding professional development. For example, something that caught my attention from Troy was the way... the confidence that he had to contradict or to say that you are incorrect, but without saying: "You are wrong". He would explain why... with confidence which is something that I need to work on because it is difficult to say that someone else's point of view is wrong. That caught my attention because in a certain way he had the power, so to speak, to say this. That is the lesson that I take because my conclusion is that you have to prepare yourself. You have to read, and not just on one topic, but about many and from many authors. Another was when we had journals in the last session and we had to turn them in. We had to give feedback. It was really interesting that we read so many journals in one sitting. This made me think about how university teachers must read many papers and analyze them. I recall that Troy told me: "What characteristic does all the feedback you have given in the journals have in common?" He told me: "You have given feedback in the same way that we gave it to you, the same type of comments, and questions... (INT-C)

This extract shows that they had a demanding but fulfilling progression in which they were able to analyze and reflect on the different aspects that needed work. For instance, they were able to notice the areas which required more improvement, such as the confidence and strong image they wanted to project.

Put your beliefs to one side, but later you realize that you acquire all the professional language that they give you and you apply them here... "Please put your beliefs to one side", "Why?" there it is. You apply all the teachers' repertoire... (INT-C)

This piece of data shows a learning opportunity taken from the discourse they were hearing and acquiring from their mentors. It is evident that the role of the mentors in the course was essential and they valued and took advantage of the efforts to train them. Having mentors there to guide them and provide them with advice helped them overcome the resistance they perceived from the teachers they tutored, by picking up aspects of their teaching and learning from their example.

Taking into consideration the teachers' resistance towards the change and self-reflection and being guided by them as their tutors, their perceptions and attitude towards the two teachers-in-training, certain strategies would help to reinforce and formalize the role of tutor. Even though they were master's students, who played the role of tutor, they had the knowledge instructed in the sessions and were enrolled into the tasks and dynamics. For example, apart from working in the tasks with the teachers in the sessions, they were at backstage reading and giving feedback teachers' journals, checking their homework, organizing certain dynamics, but at the same time paying attention to the sessions for any requirement of the mentors to participate in the lesson.

In a certain way, they helped us to have an image of formality so that when we were working with them, they took us seriously, but that did not mean that the tutor took over the entire class all the time. Martha and Troy were there are in front of the group, but once or twice it was nice to alternate, at least at the beginning of the course. They alternated to help formalize the image and you learned a lot from this. For example, Martha would mention to Annie that we had to check all the

homework, and journals. So, it was cool because I, at least, reflected on what happens behind the scenes, all the checking and everything. (INT-C)

I would perhaps change to include specific projects and work that the teachers had to complete with our help, perhaps sessions in which they could send us questions, perhaps more communication, because there were seven teachers. (INT-G)

When the course ended, the two teachers-in-training were interviewed by the coordinator of the MA in order to know their experience and insights. They concluded that their professional education and knowledge gained from the MA in Applied Linguistics in English Language Teaching and the mentoring program contributed to their professional growth.

To be more critical. We are obviously still in the process, but now considering all the knowledge we have gained from the master's… I feel that it gives you a wider perspective. I feel that I have learned to be open to criticism. We question ourselves, and if you do not know, you have to find out. Troy would tell us that we will always have our personal philosophy/ideology but something I have learned here is that you have to be open because if you shelter yourself in your own position, you are always going to return to a certain level, the BA for example. I have learned to be more open to new information and your ideology modifies itself. It has to change because if it does not, it gets left behind. Another aspect is… you start noticing the gaps that are not mentioned everywhere, even in your own work, your own teaching practice, and in other teachers. So, the master's gives you a whole new perspective and that experience… and if you notice those gaps you have to identify them because it is part of research. Another thing is how you project yourself to your audience. Something that I have noticed also in Annie and in several of my classmates is that to this point we have progressed a lot when expressing ourselves. (INT-C)

In this long excerpt we can see that their perceptions and reflections had gone through some evolution. For instance, they gained more awareness about their own conceptions and practices, noticing gaps and areas of opportunity that were needed to work on as trainees. They also became more aware of the relevance and great impact that our previous formation at the BA and MA had in their development as trainees. They recognize several details that they have been able to improve on, such as discourse, body language, image projection and more effective was to handle situations inside the course.

6. Conclusions

This small-scale research is of interest to those who want to become teacher trainers or those who train teachers. The results show that understanding how the two teachers-in-training perceived this process sheds light on what was successful and what could have been done differently according to them. Having finished the course and taking on different tasks given to these two participants helped them to see the complexities of teacher training. Because they had to overcome different obstacles as younger non-native teachers, they became stronger and more confident as teacher trainers.

Mentors understand the difficult task of finding the teachers-in-training a "place" in the ELT profession. Chances are that it took them a good amount of time, along with the directed guidance of a mentor, to find the niche they were able to thrive in and develop their personal style of teaching. This is exactly the experience and knowledge a mentor can transfer to a mentee. Their service extends beyond simple career advice to helping mentees grow as individuals with the confidence and direction they need to find a role they can excel in. Here we found that through observation of training, there is space for growth and provides them an opportunity for professional development.

The theme of collaboration emerged in the developmental aspect of mentoring. Collaboration in a teacher professional context would envision the mentor and mentee planning together and teaching together; however, this would be dependent on the level of the teacher-in-training and the type of circumstances of the training program. The type of collaboration that the mentors identified in this research was that mentoring needs to be a shared journey, which is comfortable but meets the needs of the future teacher trainers. In this case, we were able to give the mentees the opportunity to discover how to deal with real professional issues in practice, as well as, inspire some confidence for their future.

The knowledge, advice, and resources that a mentor shares depend on the format and goals of a specific mentoring relationship. A mentor may share with a mentee information about his or her own career path, as well as provide guidance, motivation, emotional support, and role modeling. A mentor may help with exploring careers decisions, setting goals, developing contacts, and identifying resources. The mentor's role may change as the needs of the mentee change. Some mentoring relationships are part of structured programs that have specific expectations and guidelines; others are more informal, as in this case where the mentees were in the role of participant observers and the role of observing was the most challenging in that in effected their relationship with the training group. Having finished this course, it was observed that the teacher trainers could have been more explicit with the entire training group from the outset.

As a conclusion, it must be noted that there is not one recipe for success in mentoring. Mentoring is multifaceted and is dependent upon the individuals in the relationship and the context in which it occurs. The major methodological issue that was constant throughout the process was a permanent interactional process that involves social skills and knowledge of context-specific communicative events, their typical goals and actions by which they are realized and the conventional behaviors by which role relationships are accomplished (Hall & Doehler, 2011). This process of negotiating inside the classroom seems to be relevant in the sense of a need to consider renegotiating how we tend to approach ethnography in the EFL profession (Madison, 2012; Richardson, 2000). It seems to suggest that a more collaborative approach to ethnography would be appropriate based on the form in which the dialogue outside of the space of the training course took on a life of its own. It suggests that a collaborative ethnographic approach, in a fashion, took over or controlled the development of the course with actually having planned it.

References

Bailey, K., Curtis, A., & Nunan, D. (2001). *Pursuing professional development: The self as source*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Barkhuizen, G. (2011). Narrative knowledging in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, *45*(3), 391-414.

Barrett, J., & Brown, H. (2014). From leaning comes meaning: Informal co-mentorship and the second-career academic in education. *The Qualitative Report*, *19*(37), 1.

_____

Boddy, C. (2005). A rose by any other name may smell as sweet but "group discussion" is not another name for a "focus group" nor should it *be. Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 8*(3), 248-255.

Brock, M., Yu, B., &Wong, M. (1992) Journaling together: collaborative diary-keeping and teacher development. In: J. Flowerdew, M. Brock & S. Hsia (Eds). *Perspectives on second language teacher development* (pp. 295-307). Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong.

Denzin, N. K. (2014). Reading the challenges of a global community and the sociological imagination. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *20*(9), 1122-1127.

Diaz-Maggioli, G. (2004). *Teacher-centered professional development.* Alexandria, VA: ASCO.

Farrell, T. S. C. (2001). *Reflective language teaching. From research to practice*. London, UK: Continuum.

Hall, J. K., Hellermann, J., & Doehler, S. P. (Eds.). (2011). *L2 interactional competence and development* (Vol. 56). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Kamberelis, G. (2001). Producing of heteroglossic classroom (micro) cultures through hybrid discourse practice. *Linguistics and Education*, *12*(1), 85-125.

Lassiter, L. E. (2005). *The Chicago guide to collaborative ethnography*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Madison, D. S. (2012). Critical ethnography: Method, ethics, and performance. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Malderz, A. (2001). New ELT professionals? *English Teaching Professional, 19*, 57-58.

Randall, M., & Thorton, B. (2001). *Advising and supporting teachers*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Richardson, L. (2000). Evaluating ethnography. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *6*(2), 253-255.

Rinehart, R. E., & Earl, K. (2016). Auto-, duo-and collaborative-ethnographies: "Caring" in an audit culture climate. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *16*(3), 210-224.

Richards, J. C., & Farrell, T. S. C. (2005). *Professional development for language teachers strategies for teacher learning,* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Ruyter, K. D. (1996). Focus versus nominal group interviews: A comparative analysis. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning, 16*(6), 44-50.